

Hello, my name is Chris Prus and I am the Director of Residential Treatment programs for CT Renaissance. We are a non-profit that serves CT's adults and youths with mental health disorders and substance use disorders. CT Renaissance and other non-profits like us have been the first line of treatment as well as the safety net that the state and local communities have relied on for decades. Despite the obvious need and imperative function that non-profits provide, we have long been underfunded. I am sure you have heard this before but any of our staff can go work another job with much less risk and responsibility for more money. The private sector has been able to meet rising costs more readily while still being able to increase their employee salaries to reasonable and livable levels. Non-profits are not afforded this opportunity. Many entry level staff are making minimum wage or just over. Many need to work 2 or 3 jobs make ends meet yet they are still dedicated to their work with our marginalized population.

The pandemic has further deepened the issue. Just this past year many non-profits were forced into quarantine periods due to COVID outbreaks. This led to massive losses in revenue as admissions needed to be paused, for some for weeks at a time. In one of our programs alone this meant a loss of over \$25,000 in just a 19-day period. A deficit that is impossible to make up when you are barely breaking even to begin with despite our best efforts. Last year's COLA, which we are very thankful for, was the first in over a decade where costs and inflation have steadily increased.

The real issue lies within the dwindling work force. With less pay available, employees are leaving for other opportunities. Leaving many programs understaffed which leaves clients at risk for losing services. Even a small collapse of the non-profit programs in the state would be catastrophic. Emergency rooms would be further overwhelmed and it would remain constant. At this point, this is not an if but a when. Non-profits have taken the burden off of the state for decades but without an appropriate COLA the burden still falls back on the non-profit sector while the state currently basks in a surplus.

Last year, the legislature stepped up and provided a Cost of Living Adjustment for nonprofits, and we are very appreciative of the legislature for getting it done. But it was less even than the inflation nonprofits experienced this year, and we're in crisis. The increase in this year's budget has quickly been absorbed by rising costs. Over the last year, inflation rose by almost six percent, surpassing the COLA in the current year's budget. Add in the reduced income due to the pandemic and we are sitting in a perfect storm. These non-profits and their clients are your constituents. We are

asking for help. 8% is the number we are looking for in order to meet the additional inflation from the last year and this year still to come. Please hear us and please help us. Thank you.

Regards,

Chris Prus, MS, LPC  
Director of Residential Treatment Programs  
CT Renaissance